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Lisle, Walter.

Contents.

A change of name.

The love test.

THE
LONDON ACTING DRAMA.

A CHANGE OF NAME.

ABERDEEN—
WILLIAM RUSSELL.

BATH—
S. J. COOK, The Civet Cat.

BRISTOL—
TOLEMAN, Rupert Street.

DUBLIN—
J. WISEHEART, Suffolk St.

EDINBURGH—
H. ROBINSON, Greenside St.

GLASGOW—
WM. LOVE, Enoch's Square.

LEEDS—
RAMSDEN, Vicar Lane.

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A CHANGE OF NAME.

A Comedietta,

IN ONE ACT.

BY

WALTER LISLE, Esq.,

AUTHOR OF

"Position," "The Love Test," &c.

LONDON:

THOMAS SCOTT, WARWICK COURT,
HOLBORN.

A CHANGE OF NAME.

Characters.

SIR JOHN HARDY

FRANK LAWLEY

MRS. OSBORNE (*a rich Widow*) ...

IDA GOLDRING (*her Cousin*) ...

WORTLEY (*a Servant*)

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SCENE—Drawing Room at Mrs. Osborne's.

*Time—Present.           Costumes—Modern.*

## A CHANGE OF NAME.

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SCENE. — *A Drawing Room at Mrs. Osborne's, elegantly furnished. On table, L., a black velvet mask.*

*As Curtain rises, MRS. OSBORNE discovered at work, R.*

MRS. OSBORNE. How dull the day after a ball is, above all after a masked ball, where the protection of the mask leaves one still more unprotected? Diana was a good dress, and of course Endymion was attracted—Endymion, in the person of Mr. Francis Lawley, my cousin Ida's opponent; thanks, however, to this black velvet shape, he could not see his partner's face, so I had the advantage, of which I mean to make use. (*taking up mask*) Thanks, my friend of last evening; my friend, I say, and yet you are a very dangerous one; a servant to lovers' intrigues; an excuse for impudence and deceit; a foe to justice, truth, and order; a screen for falsehood, shame, and vice; a friend to treachery and treason; originator of follies, foibles, and romance; a remnant of by-gone ages; no, you have too much to answer for to be my friend. And yet that age cannot have been so bad when men and women needed art's aid to disguise their natures; now, alas! nature makes the mask for every face, and art is ousted altogether.

*Enter IDA GOLDRING, R.*

IDA. Home at last; if there be one place I detest more than another it is Lincoln's Inn.

MRS. O. Anything satisfactory to-day?

IDA. Did you ever know anything legal to be satisfactory? I think the lawyers are getting more confused than ever: one of them made me a proposal of marriage to-day.

MRS. O. No wonder he was confused, he was uneasy about his suit.

IDA. I told him that the cause of Lawley and Goldring had been going on for the last twenty years, and till that was settled did he think I could ever be.

MRS. O. It appears to have been quite a family feud.

IDA. A family feud; why it has outlived two families already.

MRS. O. How is it I never heard of it till lately?

IDA. My dear, you were away in India so long.

MRS. O. And to think of Mr. Lawley carrying it on still; I had hopes of it being settled at his father's death.

IDA. It being settled! why every parent has bequeathed it as a legacy. As for Mr. Lawley, I hate him.

MRS. O. But, my dear Ida, you have never seen him.

IDA. All the more reason for my hating him; I should hate to see him.

MRS. O. How do you know that? I am certain if you were to meet that everything would be amicably arranged.

IDA. You flatter me; but I would never consent to meet him. Ever since I can remember I have been taught to look upon the name of Lawley with dread and dislike. What with the glorious uncertainty of the law, its delays and expense, since I have been in town I have been miserable, and I owe all that to Mr. Lawley; but there, let's talk of something else—how did you enjoy yourself last evening?

MRS. O. Very much, but not as much as I expected. Enjoyment is a view to which distance lends enchantment; the enchantment over, one awakes more than ever to the prosaic reality of life.

IDA. Was Sir John there?

MRS. O. Not he; you know how he dislikes society, and scorns to take part in our human follies. To tell the truth, we had a little quarrel yesterday on the subject of my going.

IDA. I don't think you behave well to him.

MRS. O. Nor he to me, surely; he calls me a flirt, and every other day vows he will never see me again, that is till the next time, which is generally twenty minutes afterwards; besides, my dear, he's so jealous.

IDA. Whose fault is that?

MRS. O. Not mine. I never suspect him.

IDA. Well, dear, I suppose you know your own happiness too well to trifle with it. I shall go and dress for dinner.

*Exit, L.*

*Enter WORTLEY, R.*

WORTLEY. Please, ma'am, a letter; the man waits for an answer.

MRS. O. (*takes letter*) From Mr. Lawley! He has found me out then; that's good, my plot so far has succeeded; let's see what he says. (*reads*) "Dear Madam,—After considerable difficulty, I have succeeded in finding out who you are. I know in having done so I have forfeited the promise made to you last night, but I feel that you will forgive me; grant me permission to apologise in person and receive my pardon from the lips of my judge. Yours respectfully and admiringly.—FRANK



LAWLEY." What would Sir John say to that I wonder? It's the only way of arranging their meeting, yet if I tell Ida Lawley is coming, she will refuse to see him. I have it, the idea is good, and I was masked. Wortley, the writing materials. (WORTLEY *brings ink, &c.—she writes*) "Dear Sir,—In answer to your letter, I am willing to receive you, but on one condition namely, that you take the name of Hare, as reasons that I cannot at present explain prevent my receiving you in your own name. If you consent to this, I am at home to you this evening." I won't sign it. (to WORTLEY) There! give this to the messenger. *Exit* WORTLEY, R.

At last I shall bring them together, but how to get Ida to consent? I have it, I must quarrel with Sir John, and here he comes.

SIR J. (*heard outside*) Thanks, you needn't announce me, I know my way. Good evening, Laura.

*Enter* SIR JOHN, R.

MRS. O. Oh, it is you, is it? Good evening.

SIR J. I am not in the way?

MRS. O. Not in mine certainly; you have come to dinner?

SIR J. If you are not going out.

MRS. O. That is said in a tone of reproach, but I am not going out; on the contrary, I am at home and expect a few friends.

SIR J. They will not come till late. How glad I am to find you at home alone. Ah, Laura, I wish that our tastes were more alike, and then society would be as distasteful to you as to me.

MRS. O. But what's the use of wishing for the impossible? I love society, it amuses me.

SIR J. And I suppose I do not.

MRS. O. I did not say so.

SIR J. But you thought it.

MRS. O. Perhaps so, but my thoughts are my own.

SIR J. Well, I confess it, does not amuse me to play the martyr.

MRS. O. The victim you mean; but who asks you to suffer, not I?

SIR J. But you make me suffer without asking. My happiness you know is centred in you. Sometimes I don't see you for a week together. It is balls, dinners, parties, operas. You are in so constant a whirl of society that it has turned you giddy.

MRS. O. Thanks for the compliment.

SIR J. You are welcome, and when I do mix in society so as to meet you, I find you a queen amongst a lot of vain

frivolous, babbling courtiers, not one of them with a grain of sense about him.

MRS. O. I beg your pardon, they have sense enough to see that their attention pleases me.

SIR J. You confess it? Well once for all, I object.

MRS. O. You object; by what right? Who gave you permission to question my actions?

SIR J. I knew you would say that. I admit I have no right, but I have asked, and do now ask you to give me that right.

MRS. O. You cannot be serious after all you have just said.

SIR J. What I said, was it so foolish then?

MRS. O. No, but what you are saying now is. You admit that I am a flirt; I don't deny it, and yet you still wish to marry me; how inconsistent.

SIR J. Because with it all I love you, and I hope in time to to win your affection.

MRS. O. Well then, if ever I marry again you shall be my choice.

SIR J. In that case there is no time like the present.

MRS. O. We are too young.

SIR J. Do you want to wait till you are sixty?

MRS. O. No, for I should be left waiting altogether then, I expect. But to tell you the truth, I am afraid of you; you are so jealous, and there is nothing worse than a jealous husband, he is a victim to his own malady, and his sufferings are intense.

SIR J. I am jealous only because my position is not secure; once my wife, I should never be jealous of you again.

MRS. O. I should be afraid to trust you.

SIR J. Try me.

MRS. O. What use? I can't trust myself. Why only last evening at the masked ball there was a very handsome man who paid me most marked attention; it was not my fault, yet I confess it amused and pleased me.

SIR J. Zounds, madam! You don't mean to say that you allowed that?

MRS. O. There, didn't I tell you so? Jealous again!

SIR J. I told you you would incur my displeasure if you went to that ball.

MRS. O. I told you that I should lose my pleasure if I did not go, so I went.

SIR J. Give me the gentleman's name?

MRS. O. Certainly—Mr. Hare.

SIR J. I'll find him, and I'll shoot him.

MRS. O. He's considered good sport no doubt, but you need not run after him, for I have invited him here.

SIR J. What, invited the adventurer here? impossible!

MRS. O. He's no adventurer, I know his family well; they have some property near mine at Teddington.

SIR J. But you're jesting. Who introduced him to you?

MRS. O. It is a personal introduction.

SIR J. Then he has been here already?

MRS. O. No, he has written to me.

SIR J. And you have answered him? How imprudent! Isn't this enough to drive me mad?

MRS. O. I really am not prepared to say.

SIR J. This is beyond everything; however, I suppose that Mr. Hare treats the whole thing as a jest.

MRS. O. A jest! the word is——

SIR J. Pardon me, but if I am to think it otherwise to to please you——

MRS. O. To please me you must cease to insult me.

SIR J. Now I insult you! I am not even allowed to remonstrate.

MRS. O. Remonstrate when you please, but not with me.

SIR J. I am tired of protesting.

MRS. O. And I am tired of you and your protests.

SIR J. Well then, madam, I will not trouble you further, neither will I further submit to these indignities at your hands.

MRS. O. At my feet you should say, for it is there you show your submission.

SIR J. No, madam, I will tear myself away from you for ever.

*Enter* IDA, L.

IDA. (*stopping* SIR JOHN) Good evening, Sir John; now you two have been quarrelling again. Laura, speak to him.

MRS. O. Sir John is quite correct in what he says, we do not suit each other; though we disagree on other points, we agree on that.

SIR J. At any rate you cannot deny that this once I have good cause for my jealousy.

MRS. O. I shall not attempt to deny it.

SIR J. And if as you say, a jealous man is a person to be avoided, how much more so then is a coquette?

MRS. O. A coquette!

SIR J. Yes, a coquette; but blind as I have been, this last piece of coquetry has opened my eyes to my weakness. I leave the field to Mr. Hare. Good-bye, madam, for ever.

*Exit* SIR JOHN, R.

IDA. Are you going to allow him to leave you like that?

MRS. O. Why not?

IDA. Because you know you are in the wrong. Who is Mr. Hare?

MRS. O. A gentleman I met last evening at the masked ball, and who I have invited here.

IDA. Invited here, Laura? This is not right.

MRS. O. Am I to bury myself to please Sir John? He is not my husband yet.

IDA. No, certainly not; but surely he's deserving of a little more consideration?

MRS. O. What would you have me do?

IDA. Find some excuse for not receiving this gentleman.

MRS. O. It is impossible, having once consented.

IDA. That doesn't matter. You don't mean to say that you really care anything about him?

MRS. O. Not in the slightest, but I do not like to appear rude; I know his relations, and I should offend them; besides now Sir John's jealousy is so proverbial, that were I to yield it would make us both appear ridiculous.

IDA. What is to be done then? Suppose I write to him?

MRS. O. To Mr. Hare?

IDA. No, to Sir John.

MRS. O. I must request that you will do nothing of the sort, he would construe it into an acknowledgment of my being in the wrong, and that no woman admits; besides now he once has the idea that I am interested in this young man, nothing will convince him to the contrary.

IDA. I would give the world to see you friends again.

MRS. O. There is one way, and one way only that would convince him that I do not care for this gentleman.

IDA. And that is——?

MRS. O. If you would consent to receive him in my stead.

IDA. I?

MRS. O. Yes, you—of course in my name. It will convince Sir John, and you will have restored me my happiness.

IDA. Are you sure of that?

MRS. O. Of course. What greater proof of my indifference can I give him? If words will not convince him, facts must. Will you consent?

IDA. Don't ask me. Only fancy, this young man, taking me for you, may perhaps make love to me!

MRS. O. Well, there isn't much harm in that—if you don't like it, stop him. Well, decide.

IDA. As it is a question of your happiness, Laura, I consent.

MRS. O. (*aside*) Success!

*Enter* WORTLEY, R.

WORTLEY. Mr. Hare!

MRS. O. Show him in here.

*Exit* WORTLEY, R.

My love, I leave you now.

IDA. What here, alone with him!

MRS. O. Certainly; my staying here would only embarrass the young man. I'll come back and assist you. *Exit, R.*

IDA. Gone, without telling me a word. Here he is!

*Enter* LAWLEY, R.

LAWLEY. Mrs. Osborne, I believe. I have not been long in availing myself of your graciously accorded permission. I have observed the condition imposed by you to a *hair*, and I assure you I am amply repaid by the pleasure of seeing you.

IDA. (*smiling*) I do not flatter myself that anything but a natural curiosity has procured me the pleasure of this visit.

LAW. Do you think curiosity alone has prompted this visit?

IDA. I quite understand your desire to know a lady you met at a masked ball; the mystery has a novelty about it, the unknown has always an advantage in spite of oneself, one's imagination pictures the face hidden by the mask as an ideal.

LAW. The real far exceeds the ideal. I admit last night I was struck by your elegance, and the sound of that voice, which I recognize again.

IDA. You recognize my voice? (*laughing*)

LAW. I should know it among thousands; that charm even a jealous mask could not hide; imagination did the rest.

IDA. So if by chance we had met, you think you would have known me?

LAW. I am certain of it. I hope we shall often meet now. You live in London, I suppose? It is a hard life, operas, balls, theatres, a world of pleasure, I'm fond of it, are you?

IDA. Yes; but I am equally pleased with a country life—the happiest time of my life has been passed in the country with a dear old uncle.

LAW. (*aside*) I wish I was that dear old uncle. (*aloud*) Yet with an uncle it must sometimes be dull. How would it have been if the uncle had been a husband?

IDA. (*aside*) He's beginning. (*aloud*) It would have spoiled all, husbands generally do.

LAW. Is that your experience?

IDA. No; but friendship is far better, far more tranquil than love. Love dies away leaving regrets and sorrow; friendship lasts till death.

LAW. And so does true love, believe me.

*Enter* MRS. OSBORNE, with piece of music, L.

MRS. O. My dear, I must give up this duet; I shall never manage it this evening.

LAW. (*aside*) How provoking!



IDA. Let me introduce you to Mr. Hare.

MRS. O. Mr. Hare, how do you do? I know your family well.

LAW. My family?

MRS. O. Yes, the Hares of Coverdale; your uncle was my father's oldest friend; is he quite well?

LAW. (*aside*) Never heard of him. (*aloud*) No, madam, he's dead.

MRS. O. I am really very sorry, you are very much like him.

IDA. (*aside*) She's mad.

MRS. O. I wish I could get some one to try the duet with me; perhaps you are a musician, sir?

LAW. Yes, a little; but I have a very bad cold. (*aside*) Will she never go?

MRS. O. Well then, I must give it up, I suppose. (*sits, L.*)

LAW. (*aside*) She's a fixture.

MRS. O. (*to IDA*) What do you think of him? Not bad, eh.

IDA. (*aside*) I think him very amiable and clever.

MRS. O. So, so, it works well. In that case I will make peace with him for your sake. (*aloud*) I've forgotten to give some orders about dinner. Mr. Hare dines with us.

IDA. I don't know if he is engaged,

LAW. I accept with pleasure.

MRS. O. I must say good bye for the present, then. *Exit, R.*

IDA. She is a charming woman, is she not?

LAW. She seems so.

IDA. So witty and so pretty.

LAW. I hardly looked at her, but I am willing to like her, as without her I should have been obliged to leave you. Have you then forgotten our conversation of last evening?

IDA. (*smiling*) I confess it would require a great effort on my part to remember it.

LAW. You did not attach the same importance to it that I did. One thing, however, astonishes me.

IDA. And that is——

LAW. Under the mask you seemed all life, gaiety and poetry.

IDA. One cannot be always talking ball-room nonsense.

LAW. Don't regret it; reason and sensibility are far preferable. How many women are brilliant, how few are really amiable! the former command admiration, the latter esteem and respect.

IDA. You flatter me.

LAW. Not now; last night when the mask gave license to flattery I might have paid compliments, but now that I have seen you flattery is dumb. Such beauty——

IDA. Stay, you will oblige me to assume the mask again if you talk like that.

LAW. I almost wish you would, as it would enable me to say a thousand things I dare not utter.

*Enter WORTLEY, R.*

WORT. A lady wishes to see you.

IDA. I leave you but for a few minutes.

LAW. As I did not expect the pleasure of dining with you, I must be allowed to go home and dress; I will return as soon as possible.

*Exeunt IDA and WORTLEY, R.*  
Six o'clock, half an hour to spare. (*takes up mask*) Ah! sweet friend, what pleasure have I not to thank you for? Lucky mask to grace such a wearer. By Jove! Lawley, you're in love. I am; no woman ever pleased and fascinated me so much before; what intelligence, what taste, what sweetness, what sensibility! And the tales about her being a flirt, not a word true, I'll be bound, people are so jealous. Everyone tells me I ought to marry, so I will. I couldn't make a better choice, Eh, Sir John Hardy?

*Enter SIR JOHN, R.*

SIR J. Lawley in town. Since when?

LAW. Three days ago—returned from Vienna, have seen my lawyer since my return, in fact I have seen no one but him or I should have called on you.

SIR J. Well, I am glad to see you in town again. But I didn't know you visited here.

LAW. No! No more did I till this evening; but don't call me Lawley here, I am known by the name of Hare.

SIR J. Hare! (*aside*) It is he.

LAW. Yes, of the Hares of Coverdale—fine old family, possessors of immense fields, &c.

SIR J. But why this change of name?

LAW. Well, I don't mind telling you as you're a friend, Mrs. Osborne made that one of the conditions of my visit, and I subscribed to that when I subscribed myself her humble adorer.

SIR J. You!

LAW. Yes, have you any objection? I was just considering whether proposing this evening wouldn't be a little sudden?

SIR J. I should suggest to you just to consider how the lady would be likely to receive the proposal.

LAW. I think it would be well received; I was at any rate. I'm glad you know her. Do you often come here?

SIR J. Nearly every day.

LAW. So much the better, then you can help me.

SIR J. How?

LAW. By saying a good word for me.

SIR J. Say your good words for yourself.

LAW. What, you refuse an old friend.

SIR J. Absolutely.

LAW. Don't you think it a suitable match.

SIR J. Suitable or not, in this affair I cannot be your friend, for I am your rival——

LAW. What!

SIR J. For the last eighteen months I have been paying my addresses to Mrs. Osborne; it's true I have not met with much encouragement, but you who met her last evening at a ball, to think that you have any chance is absurd. I believe her to be a coquette, but not to that extent, do you understand me?

LAW. Perfectly; but at the same time you admit that you have not met with much encouragement.

SIR J. You are Job's comforter.

LAW. I can't give up all hope.

SIR J. One of us must though.

LAW. Then let Mrs. Osborne decide which of us it shall be: if you are chosen I shall be none the less your friend. If I am the lucky individual——

SIR J. I shall always envy your luck.

LAW. Perhaps I had better not leave you here.

SIR J. I will not see her till you return. Does that satisfy you?

LAW. Yes, I shall be back before long.

*Exit, R.*

SIR J. And she taunts me with being jealous—this is too much!

*Enter IDA, R.*

SIR J. Ah, Miss Goldring! I am indeed a miserable man.

IDA. I don't care how miserable you are, I am so glad to see you back again, that I am quite happy, but what is the matter now?

SIR J. You know how your cousin taunts me about my creating shadows to be jealous of? Alas, this time it is no shadow, but substance—substance, in the masculine form of Frank Lawley, that I have for rival.

IDA. Frank Lawley?

SIR J. Yes, he has this moment left me; they met at that masked ball last night which I forbade her going to. Lawley wrote to her this morning, asking her to receive him here, which she agreed to do on condition of his taking the name of Hare.

IDA. What!

SIR J. I don't wonder you're indignant, so am I.

IDA. What, Mr. Hare is Mr. Lawley?



SIR J. Yes. (*aside*) What perfidy! What falsehood!

IDA. (*aside*) To play a trick like that on me.

SIR J. To toy with such sincere affection.

IDA. To compromise me like this.

SIR J. To quarrel with me so as to be free to receive him.

IDA. I didn't think her capable of this.

SIR J. Nor I; I thought her vain, but not false. I am completely cured of my folly. (*to IDA*) I cannot tell you how much obliged I am to you for your sympathy.

IDA. My sympathy is with myself, as I am the only person who has cause to complain.

SIR J. You! Why you?

IDA. Don't you recollect all my fortune depends on a Chancery Suit with Mr. Lawley?

SIR J. I had forgotten it.

IDA. You wouldn't if you had been a party to it. My cousin Laura, with all her vanity, has a most affectionate heart; ever since she heard about the suit, she has said that nothing but a meeting between us would reconcile us; for that purpose she made friends with Mr. Lawley at the ball, and allowed him to come here this evening, quarrelled with you, and then, under the pretext of reconciling you to her, persuaded me to take her name and place, and it is I, and not Laura, who have received the pretended Mr. Hare.

SIR J. What! it was you he saw then?

IDA. I should never have consented if I had known Mr. Lawley was coming; that accounts for her insisting on his change of name.

SIR J. I see it all now. It is you then that he loves, and wanted almost to fight me for?

IDA. How, Sir John?

SIR J. It is a fact I assure you. Marry him, my dear Miss Goldring.

IDA. Not so fast; it is customary for the gentlemen to ask the ladies. Laura has a great deal to answer for.

SIR J. Not to me, I must ask her forgiveness.

IDA. Stay, I don't wish her to know that I have found out the *ruse*.

SIR J. Why not?

IDA. Well, she thinks I am her dupe, and I should not be sorry to revenge myself.

SIR J. You can rely on me.

*Exit, R.*

IDA. What will Mr. Lawley think of me? he will never believe that I too have been deceived. It was very unkind of Laura; if he does care for me, it is because he thinks I am his unknown of last evening.

*Enter* LAWLEY, L.

LAW. I didn't expect to find you here alone, I left Sir John Hardy here.

IDA. He has just left me. I did not know you were acquainted.

LAW. We are old college chums. What do you think of him?

IDA. My opinion—well, he is very amiable.

LAW. (*aside*) I like to know the worst. (*aloud*) You will not be offended at my asking you, but is Sir John very pleasing to you?

IDA. I don't think he ever tries to be.

LAW. That's no answer.

IDA. He is a very agreeable friend.

LAW. Nothing more to you than a friend?

IDA. Certainly not.

LAW. But don't you know that he loves you; that he is mad about you? I found this out only by accident.

IDA. Did Sir John then lead you to imagine I cared for him?

LAW. Indeed he did.

IDA. Impossible! he knows that I shall never marry, for independently of the usual matrimonial risks, my entire fortune depends on the result of a Chancery suit.

LAW. Strangely enough I also have a large sum of money at stake in a Chancery suit.

IDA. What you too?

LAW. Yes, but then I am certain to win—at least the lawyers all tell me so.

IDA. (*aside*) That's pleasant to hear.

LAW. Yes, and it is rather hard too, as my opponent is a lady.

IDA. An old lady?

LAW. No, a young lady. Her friends wanted me to marry her, saying it would be the simplest way to settle the matter.

IDA. And you refused?

LAW. Rather; fancy my marrying a buxom Devonshire lass.

IDA. Do you know her?

LAW. I've never seen her, but one always knows these kind of girls; they are all the same type—awkward, no style, no wit, no talent; a pair of red cheeks and a dimple—one of those women who marry a curate.

IDA. And the curate gets the best of it, but that's a caricature. I happen to be able to tell you that the lady in question is utterly unlike your sketch of her.

LAW. What do you know of her?

IDA. Well I know that she is generous, forgiving, amiable and intelligent; she has faults, no doubt—who has not?

LAW. I am sorry I spoke as I did, now that I know she is your friend.

IDA. There you are, because she is my friend; you men are like weathercocks. I dare say you would tell me as you did last night, that I am charming, and all that, and you know about as much about me as about Miss Goldring.

LAW. What a difference! but your friend will be revenged if I have incurred your displeasure.

IDA. Let her revenge herself. I am of opinion that you should see her.

LAW. To what end?

IDA. To the end of courtship, marriage, and the settlement of your Chancery suit.

LAW. I would sooner lose everything than save it at such a price, because I love you; I know you will call it madness, but I love you.

IDA. It's useless your talking of love to me, I have already told you I may be ruined at any moment; and if I lose this Chancery suit I will never marry.

LAW. I will alter your decision or I will remain a bachelor.

IDA. Without knowing whether Miss Goldring will suit you or not?

LAW. She does not suit me.

IDA. Supposing without being aware of it you had seen her?

LAW. Eh!

IDA. If she were the lady you are going to dine with?

LAW. That lady! I didn't like her at first.

IDA. She is charming.

LAW. To please you I will think her perfect, and to prove to you that she loses nothing by being your friend, I put our interests in your hands, judge between us, and whatever compromise you propose I agree to it beforehand.

IDA. Your trust in me touches me, especially as you say you are sure of winning.

LAW. No matter, I will sign anything except a marriage contract.

IDA. Well, here she is?

*Enter MRS. OSBORNE and SIR JOHN HARDY, R.*

You could not have arrived more apropos. Mr. Lawley, whom I now call by his right name, informed of the friendship that unites me to Miss Goldring, has made most generous offers in her behalf, and has consented to leave to me the arrangement of all differences.

LAW. I dare not plead against a person so dear to you both.

MRS. O. I do not disguise she is dear to me.

LAW. (*aside*) I believe it.

SIR J. How do you attend to accomplish this?

LAW. In the shortest and simplest way.

SIR J. That will be by marriage.

LAW. Why so, when I am ready to make any sacrifice?

MRS. O. That is just why.

LAW. (*aside*) She is determined I shall marry her.

SIR J. (*aside*) As a friend, ensure your happiness.

LAW. (*aside*) And ensure yours by getting a rival out of the way.

MRS. O. Sir John is right, marriage is the easiest method.

LAW. What a strange woman!

SIR J. (*aside*) Say you will marry her.

LAW. To speak plainly, I must refuse; I admit that you are a charming lady, but I could not marry you.

MRS. O. Marry *me*! who do you take me for then?

LAW. Miss Goldring.

MRS. O. (*to* IDA) So you gave me your name I see.

IDA. In exchange for your own.

LAW. What, are you Miss Goldring?

IDA. Yes, the Devonshire lass—awkward, no style, no wit, a pair of red cheeks, and a dimple.

LAW. How can I hope for pardon? From this moment I am no longer your opponent, you have won the cause.

MRS. O. And you I can see have won yours.

LAW. Is that so?

IDA. I am afraid so, I am bound by Laura's decree.

SIR J. And am I forgiven?

MRS. O. Of course you are, and (*to* AUDIENCE) if you will but show your approval of this settlement, we will consent every evening until further notice to a CHANGE OF NAME.

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Lisle (W)

THE  
LOVE TEST.

A Comedietta,  
IN ONE ACT.

BY  
WALTER LISLE, Esq.,

*Author of "Position."*

LONDON:  
SAMUEL FRENCH,  
PUBLISHER,  
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SAMUEL FRENCH & SON,  
PUBLISHERS,  
122, NASSAU STREET.



## LOVE TEST.

*First performed at the Gaiety Theatre, on Saturday,  
June 22nd, 1873.*

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### Characters.

CAPTAIN BEAUMONT (*a Naval*

*Captain, about 40 years of age*) ... Mr. GEORGE TEMPLE.

MRS. LESLIE (*a rich Widow*) Miss FANNY WHITEHEAD.

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SCENE.—Apartment in Mrs. Leslie's House at  
Portsmouth.

MODERN COSTUMES.



## THE LOVE TEST.

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SCENE.—*An elegant handsomely furnished Room in Mrs. Leslie's house. Fire-place with gilt looking-glass above, R.; clock on mantelpiece; centre arch opening on to balcony, C.; a little work table and sofa, L.; arm-chairs and table, R.; doors R. and L.*

SERVANT *discovered placing a lamp on mantelpiece as curtain rises.*

*Enter* MRS. LESLIE, R.

MRS. LESLIE. (*in evening dress*) The Captain not here yet? (*to* SERVANT) Bring some refreshment, as I expect Captain Beaumont here every minute. The visitors will arrive about nine o'clock, so if you light up the rooms by eight it will do, and I will come then and see if everything is as it should be. You can go now.

*Exit* SERVANT, R.

MRS. L. A ball, what a bore! a year or two ago I should not have said so, but I am getting old, and if I intend to marry, it is high time to decide. Marry again! I cannot resign myself to the thought. I have promised to give the Captain my positive answer to-night—yes or no. Shall it be yes, or shall it be no? Indeed I do not know which to say. All my life, all my happiness depends on one word—yes! those three terrible letters. (*crosses, L.—sitting on sofa*) At twenty how easy it is to say it; it means love, hope, liberty; but when one's nearly thirty it has a serious meaning, especially for me, whose first marriage was—I shall say no! so much the worse for the Captain, yet he is very good and amiable in his way, and loves me after a fashion; but I am resolved not to marry again. I will find some means to——

CAPTAIN BEAUMONT. (*without*) Why the devil didn't you say you couldn't drive!

MRS. L. Ah, here he is; he takes care to announce himself.

CAPT. B. (*outside*) You confounded stupid, you! Damn it, hold your tongue, or I will——

*Enter CAPTAIN BEAUMONT, his dress is the uniform of a Post Captain, without sword.*

MRS. L. But, Captain, why this rage?

CAPT. B. You, Madam! Pardon me, I beg of you, I'm afraid I swore.

MRS. L. Afraid you swore?

CAPT. B. It is that blockhead John, confound him.

MRS. L. (*laughingly*) Oh yes, yes.

CAPT. B. True, a thousand pardons, I was saying it was that blockhead, John.

*Enter SERVANT, L., with a tray and grog, which he places on little table at L., by the sofa.*

MRS. L. (*rising*) Your servant?

CAPT. B. An old sailor, who was helmsman on board the "Invincible." He thought that he could steer a horse like a ship, but whatever he may be at sea, he's a damned bad pilot on land. (*sits, R.*)

MRS. L. Calm yourself, and wish me good evening, as that seems to have slipped your memory. (CAPTAIN *kisses her hand*)

CAPT. B. True, I beg pardon; but if you had been put out by such a confounded—

MRS. L. Oh! oh! do stop swearing for a little while.

CAPT. B. Have I been swearing, then?

MRS. L. I should think so; those awful oaths grate on my ears.

CAPT. B. Curse me, I am very sorry—I ask pardon.

MRS. L. What, still!

CAPT. B. How! I swore?

MRS. L. (*sits*) For goodness' sake tell me how you acquired that dreadful habit—you, Captain Beaumont, brother to Lord Melcombe, one of the first gentlemen of the land.

CAPT. B. (*sits*) How could I help it? though brother to a lord, my father was only a Captain of a man-of-war, he died at Trafalgar like a brave gentleman. I only received a sailor's education, and was brought up by my grandfather, a regular sea-dog. With him I learnt to swear before I did to read, and if he didn't teach me the language of a courtier, damn it, it was because he didn't know it himself. He made a regular sailor of me, in fact a sea monster, and since the age of fourteen I have never left the sea, except for very short periods; but now I have eight months' leave, during which time (*rises*) I shall forget my first passion, the ocean, near the most adorable of women.

MRS. L. Ah, now you convict yourself.

CAPT. B. How so, my pretty skiff? (*sits*)

MRS. L. Why, only a moment ago, you spoke of the poor sailor sort of education you had received, and now you are leaving the Mediterranean for the shore of Pacific tenderness.

CAPT. B. Egad, that is not convicting myself! Now, if you would only make the voyage there with me, I——

MRS. L. Captain!

CAPT. B. You know what you promised me this evening, I am to know my fate? Have you well reflected?

MRS. L. (*aside*) The critical moment has arrived.

CAPT. B. Well, is it to be my promotion or my passport?

MRS. L. (*confused*) Well, but there, your grog is getting cold.

CAPT. B. Would it make you so unhappy then to sail under Captain Beaumont's command?

MRS. L. I have resolved never to sail again.

CAPT. B. Hang it! Why not?

MRS. L. The remembrance of my first voyage will prevent my ever taking a second.

CAPT. B. (*smiling*) You doubt my love for you then?

MRS. L. Your love!

CAPT. B. I love you to distraction!

MRS. L. To distract yourself you mean.

CAPT. B. I adore you?

MRS. L. As the earth does the sun, till it sets!

CAPT. B. (*rises*) Bombard me, madam! What do you mean?

MRS. L. (*rises*) I mean this, that you are true to yourself, and think that you love me, while you are with me; but when away——

CAPT. B. Zounds, near or far; keep me at ever so great a distance, I should always love you!

MRS. L. Well, now supposing I yield to your—(*crosses, L.*) entreaties—(*aside*) which I do not intend to do.

CAPT. B. What you yield!

MRS. L. And that I marry you! (*sits on sofa*)

CAPT. B. That you marry me? Don't torture me, or confound it, I shall go mad!

MRS. L. I said, suppose; you would probably be like my first husband. (CAPTAIN *sits*) When he was introduced to me, he was a charming young man, pleasant, amiable, distinguished, witty and clever; he courted me with a marked and uninterrupted assiduity, and took the greatest possible care to please me, and he did so; I married him with the conviction that I had the perfection of husbands! But, alas, the day I became Mrs. Leslie, everything changed; my husband having no further need to disguise his character, showed himself what

he really was, a thoroughly selfish man, having no thought or care for his wife. Ah, you men—you men, I am afraid you are a bad lot!

CAPT. B. Fire and furies, allow us a little good; we are not all alike.

MRS. L. (*aside*) Luckily, or you would not stand much chance; (*aloud*) but I was thinking of you a few moments ago while I was watering the flowers in my garden, I perceived a beautiful rose gracefully hanging by its stem, balanced by the wind, and making the air balmy with a delicious perfume. It seemed to say, "Pluck me, my freshness, my perfume are yours; pluck me, my beauty will make yours still more lovely." Look! hardly had I taken it from its branch than its perfume had gone, its freshness disappeared, it is dried up and withered.

CAPT. B. Zounds! What the devil does this mean?

MRS. L. It means that lovers are like roses! Let them bend down gracefully at your feet, water them with hopes, but pluck them—never! (*she throws rose away*)

CAPT. B. (*picking up the rose—rises*) Then the rose is——

MRS. L. (*rises*) You—you will own the comparison is flattering.

CAPT. B. (*rises*) Drat it, just like the women, who, the moment a man speaks seriously to them, begin to joke with him.

MRS. L. Just like the men, who wish every word they say to be believed.

CAPT. B. Egad! it seems to me that my word is as good as anyone else's.

MRS. L. In a matter of love the most loyal man does not scruple to tell a lie.

CAPT. B. Bombard me, but I think——

MRS. L. The unusual effort does you great credit.

CAPT. B. But dash it all—— (*crosses, L.*)

MRS. L. Calm yourself, and don't storm in that way, you frighten me. I was going to say that I believe you incapable of making even the smallest sacrifice for my sake.

CAPT. B. Confound it, you have never given me a chance.

MRS. L. I never had one to give.

CAPT. B. Egad! you seem determined to construe all my words in a different meaning to what I intended.

MRS. L. Any fresh construction must be for the better.

CAPT. B. Zounds! constructions are sometimes too free.

MRS. L. And so are the people who make them.

CAPT. B. Zounds! I would go through fire and water to serve you.

MRS. L. Through red fire in a stage car, and salt water in a boat.



CAPT. B. This is making me hot. (*walking about*)

MRS. L. The fire?

CAPT. B. No, this unseemly bandying of words; at least put me to the test, that I may show my devotion.

MRS. L. You will not be above proof?

CAPT. B. Never mind as long as I am not below it.

MRS. L. Useless, I assure you.

CAPT. B. Bombard me—but you will send me out of my mind. (*he paces the stage from R. to L.*)

MRS. L. I did not know it was capacious enough to let you in and out at pleasure.

CAPT. B. A thousand rockets, but it is beyond a joke.

MRS. L. Now, I always thought a joke beyond it!

CAPT. B. Thunder and lightning—I really have a great mind——

MRS. L. One wouldn't think so from your conversation.

CAPT. B. Confound it—dash it—damn it!

MRS. L. (*aside*) What an excellent idea.

CAPT. B. Then confound it, you positively refuse to give me even a trial, the meanest criminal is not condemned unheard.

MRS. L. There will be no fear of that in your case. I consent to judge you, but take my counsel and don't let the trial come on.

CAPT. B. Zounds, why not, I don't intend to be compromised!

MRS. L. You will be certain to be committed.

CAPT. B. Gad! it will not be for committing myself. Now what are your commands, I live but to obey them.

MRS. L. You say that you love me?

CAPT. B. Founder me, as madly as ever.

MRS. L. True, more madly than sensibly; then I cannot be too exacting.

CAPT. B. Confound it, no; ask me things the most improbable and difficult.

MRS. L. Take care! you will probably get yourself into difficulties by this, you are saying too much.

CAPT. B. Zounds! I fear nothing, why should I? Command, I entreat, I am longing to obey——

MRS. L. Your longing shall be satisfied. Now if you can remain one hour, one hour only without swearing, I will marry you.

CAPT. B. (*surprised*) Without swearing?

MRS. L. Yes, if you can.

CAPT. B. If I can—you think that because a little while ago there escaped me once or twice by chance—I——

MRS. L. I cannot allow an escape even once. You must remain here without breathing or uttering the least oath of any kind, small or large.

CAPT. B. *Sapristi!* without swearing, what an idea.

MRS. L. I cannot even tolerate an oath in any foreign language.

CAPT. B. I thought you were going to ask me something much more difficult.

MRS. L. That will satisfy me; I do not then exact too much?

CAPT. B. Too much! why no, it is as easy as swearing; ask me something else.

MRS. L. What, you draw back already?

CAPT. B. Draw back! no, I'm d——

MRS. L. Hem, what did you remark?

CAPT. B. I said no; I do not draw back.

MRS. L. There is still time if you wish to refuse.

CAPT. B. Confound it, refuse, never! What, cut my own throat, is it likely?

MRS. L. No, I think not; but mind, without swearing.

CAPT. B. Without swearing, I swear it.

MRS. L. (*laughing*) No, no, don't do that. My visitors will soon be here, I must go and see if all the arrangements are complete. (*going, R.*) The moment I come back the trial begins.

CAPT. B. Never fear but I shall be acquitted of selfish indifference by the love test.

MRS. L. (*aside—going out*) I have him at last. *Exit, R.*

CAPT. B. Without swearing—without swearing. Damn it, it's not so easy. Bah! it is only for an hour, and I love her so. (*sits on sofa*) Still I should have wished for something else, damn it! (*rises and descends, R.*) There I go, swearing again. Confound it, that's not an oath, yes it is; dash it, that's another; decidedly it is not easy. A little energy, the reward is more than equivalent to the sacrifice. Ah, perhaps you would like a little romance, madam, well; I will give you some after your own style, I will be tender, gallant, and sentimental. (*going, R.*) Oh, my grandfather, shut your eyes! here she comes. Courage, Beaumont, courage, become worthy of your lordly brother, and, damn me, don't swear before ladies.

*Enter MRS. LESLIE, R.*

MRS. L. Let the trial begin. (*she goes to approach her work table from sofa*)

CAPT. B. I cannot see.

MRS. L. Perhaps there is not light enough.

CAPT. B. I mean, allow me to have the trouble of moving the table. (*CAPTAIN brings table and places it R. of sofa*)

MRS. L. Then you acknowledge it is a trouble?

CAPT. B. Indeed not—a pleasure, I assure you.

MRS. L. Thanks, it is eight o'clock now; at nine, then, the trial will be over.

-CAPT. B. At nine you will be Mrs. Captain Beaumont.

MRS. L. That depends on you; I shall see if you really love me.

CAPT. B. (*with energy*) If I really love you—(*calming*) If I love you——

(*he takes chair, L., and sits next to MRS. LESLIE, by sofa, is going to speak, hesitates and stops*)

MRS. L. (*after a pause*) Well, are you going to say something? You must speak, if you are silent the case cannot be tried.

CAPT. B. They say silence is golden.

MRS. L. Sometimes it's gilt.

CAPT. B. Not in my case, unless love be guilt. (*aside*) Now to romance a bit. (*he yawns*)

MRS. L. You were telling me——

CAPT. B. I—I never opened my mouth!

MRS. L. Oh, yes, you did, you were yawning; don't let me interrupt you, pray go on.

CAPT. B. What a glorious idea yours was.

MRS. L. Not at all, you wished for an opportunity to prove your love for me. I have given it to you.

CAPT. B. You are as adorable as you are adored.

MRS. L. Then I am not greatly adored!

CAPT. B. Do you think marriage a joke that you jest in this way?

MRS. L. Oh, no, it's no joke. Seriously, though, I am afraid this test will be too severe for you.

CAPT. B. On the contrary, I find it too easy. What would not one give to deserve happiness like this, that I have so longed for!

MRS. L. You do not express your own thoughts, Captain!

CAPT. B. Whose else, pray; yes, oh, rival of Venus, I am certain to win you.

MRS. L. Oh, rival of Neptune, I am certain you'll lose.

CAPT. B. (*hesitating*) We'll see then. The ardent flame beaming from your lovely eyes and which devours my burning heart—inspires me to do anything to—to conquer your matchless beauty.

MRS. L. The comparison is flattering truly!

CAPT. B. Comparison to what?

MRS. L. To your ship, you are trying to make me out invincible.

CAPT. B. I feel intoxicated with joy in finding myself thus near you, queen of my heart, who—who—(*aside in a passion*) Go on, fool!

MRS. L. (*aside*) He does not swear.

CAPT. B. Where you reign supreme and none other can ever enter. Never did a flame—(*aside*) I have said something about a flame already, she will think my heart is a fireplace. (*aloud*) Never has faithful love deserved to be more rewarded than mine.

MRS. L. (*shakes her head and keeps time with him*) What novel have you been studying lately?

CAPT. B. Novel, madam, novel, I speak the old yet ever novel language of love. See (*going up, c.*) everything invites us to think of love, the blue sky, the silvery moon, and the golden stars.

MRS. L. (*aside*) He does not swear.

CAPT. B. The birds hidden by the foliage of yonder tree make their melodious voices heard. (*aside*) Oh, if my grandfather were only to hear me now!

MRS. L. (*aside*) But he does not swear, and time flies.

CAPT. B. The nightingale, madam, the nightingale warbles forth his tuneful song; the little sheep, madam, the little sheep bleat piteously in the meadows; the thoughtful ox, madam, the thoughtful ox! (*action of anger—aside*) What a thoughtless ass I was to accept this test.

MRS. L. (*aside*) He is going to swear. No! but he must, I must make him. (*aloud*) Certainly the ardour of the flame, the little sheep, and the pensive ox express very poetically your supposed love.

CAPT. B. (*sits*) Supposed—say rather the torture that my heart endures.

MRS. L. (*sits*) But you must know that I have not much faith in men's love in general, sailors in particular!

CAPT. B. Pray do not say anything against the Navy!

(*she gets up, takes some wool from her basket and works*)

MRS. L. (*aside*) I knew this would do it. (*aloud*) I only say what I think. I agree with you a sailor makes a convenient husband, but not for a woman in love, oh dear no. A sailor marries, two days afterwards he is ordered to embark, then his wife is alone; one year slips by, then two, and then three—no husband, oh, it's charming! The husband re-appears, he has lost an arm or a leg by this or that fight, and is subject to rheumatism and fever; his country having no further use for him, returns him to his wife, who will have the happiness of caring for this broken-down invalid for the rest of her life. There is a picture of a very happy wife for you.

CAPT. B. But, madam, allow me to tell you that all this is not the case with—

MRS. L. You stand up for them because you are one of them.



CAPT. B. But——

MRS. L. However, you know their faults.

CAPT. B. Their faults, d——do you call unavoidable things faults?

MRS. L. Not unavoidable, for they should not marry. A woman's a fool who marries one of them.

CAPT. B. Many women are so without; clever author that who said there was nothing new in them but their faces.

MRS. L. And many of them are old. Doubtless sailors sacrifice everything to glory.

CAPT. B. And so women are even jealous of that, are they?

MRS. L. I did not say so. As a rule, too, they are ungrateful, selfish.

CAPT. B. How ungrateful, selfish? The sailor's——

MRS. L. What's the matter with you?

CAPT. B. What time is it?

MRS. L. There is a clock on the mantelpiece.

CAPT. B. (*going to it*) A quarter past eight.

MRS. L. Oh, it's quite early!

CAPT. B. Early, it's too early, your clock has stopped.

MRS. L. I think not.

CAPT. B. I am certain it has.

MRS. L. Listen, I can hear it tick, it goes.

CAPT. B. Yes, it goes—it goes, but it is too slow.

MRS. L. Not a bit of it, it is you who are too slow.

CAPT. B. Now you will see—(*pulls out his watch*) a quarter past eight.

MRS. L. You see it is correct.

CAPT. B. (*in despair*) Yes, I wish it wasn't. (*sits R. of table, aside*) This is torture.

MRS. L. (*aside*) But he does not swear. What shall I do?

CAPT. B. (*sits at table*) I am choking!

MRS. L. (*aside*) I have it. I will try and make him jealous. Why only yesterday I was speaking about sailors to Mr. Dobson. (*rises and crosses to R. of table, R., and sits*)

CAPT. B. Mr. Dobson! What, the barrister?

MRS. L. Yes, you know him, do you not?

CAPT. B. Oh, yes, I know him.

MRS. L. A charming young man, is he not?

CAPT. B. A fop!

MRS. L. You will allow he has a distinguished appearance?

CAPT. B. A thorough cad!

MRS. L. Lively.

CAPT. B. Pretentious!

MRS. L. I like him.

CAPT. B. That's more than I do, he is a——

MRS. L. You forget yourself, Captain

CAPT. B. It is not because you so often forget me that I should so soon forget myself? I didn't swear. (*aside*) It was not for want of inclination though.

MRS. L. You forget I consider him one of my best friends.

CAPT. B. No, I remembered and stopped in time. (*aside*) Oh, that clock.

MRS. L. Mr. Dobson agreed with me entirely.

CAPT. B. Well, I don't think he'd agree with me at all! (*aside*) If I could only—(*aloud*) I don't care about his opinion one way or the other—(*rises—aside*) by turning the hands just a little bit round I could manage it. (*he goes up to clock*)

MRS. L. And yet it is considered worth something; being a barrister, he has his head set right on his shoulders.

CAPT. B. So has a jackass.

MRS. L. Eh, Captain—(*aside*) he's getting angry. (*aloud*) I declare you are too hard upon him.

CAPT. B. Well, he is soft enough.

MRS. L. (*her eyes fixed on her work*) I am sure he is an accomplished gentleman in every sense of the word!

CAPT. B. (*profiting by her inattention, tries to open clock*) Really you speak of him with such a warmth of feeling.—

(MRS. LESLIE moves a little, he returns and puts his back against the mantelpiece)

MRS. L. (*aside*) What is he trying to do?

CAPT. B. (*aside—trying to open clock*) It will not open. (*aloud*) That would lead one to believe—

MRS. L. Yes, some people, but you're not so easily led.

CAPT. B. How pretty she looks.

MRS. L. Well, yes, I confess at our interview of yesterday he made somewhat of an impression upon me.

CAPT. B. (*same play*) Did he kiss you?

MRS. L. Sir! (*aside*) What is he doing to my clock?

CAPT. B. I beg pardon, I thought he sealed the impression. Was the interview very interesting, then?

MRS. L. To the participators, very.

CAPT. B. (*same play—aside*) I have got hold of it this time. (*aloud*) And what was the subject of your conversation?

MRS. L. A subject that concerned him deeply—he told me of his love.

CAPT. B. What for you? (*the clock sounds like broken*) D—Dobson. (*aside*) Ah, I have broken it.

MRS. L. (*aside*) I knew he would.

CAPT. B. (*aside*) What shall I do?

MRS. L. What time is it now, Captain?

CAPT. B. (*taking out his watch*) Half-past eight.

MRS. L. Half-past eight, but by my clock—

CAPT. B. We keep the same time.

MRS. L. (*aside—going, R.*) He puts himself in a passion, he breaks my clock, but he does not swear.

CAPT. B. So he spoke to you of his love, and you listened to him.

MRS. L. Politeness compelled, as it compelled me to listen to you.

CAPT. B. Then I am to understand——

MRS. L. No, you will never do that.

CAPT. B. Can I believe my senses?

MRS. L. I would not if I were you, they often deceive you.

CAPT. B. But Mrs. Leslie, *my love*——

MRS. L. Yours! Who tells me it is more sincere than his.

CAPT. B. Than his?—a thousand millions.

MRS. L. Eh?

CAPT. B. Yes, a thousand millions would I willingly give to marry you at once.

MRS. L. Of bon-mots or bombshells. (*aside*) He still holds from——

CAPT. B. Of pounds of diamonds! (*aside*) Not to be able to swear.

MRS. L. (*aside*) Serves me right for proposing so absurd a test. I shall be married in spite of myself. No, I must at any cost make him swear. (*aloud*) Why, what is the matter with you?

CAPT. B. I am rather warm, that's all.

MRS. L. Now, I thought you rather cool. I should suggest a turn in the garden.

CAPT. B. It was not hotter than this on board the "Invincible," the day of the last fight I was in.

MRS. L. (*aside*) A battle! I have still a chance! (*aloud*) You were in an action at sea—how dreadful!

CAPT. B. Less dreadful than being in an action at law, I assure you.

MRS. L. Was it then you gained your captaincy?

CAPT. B. What, you knew that?

MRS. L. Not at all a terrible fight, was it?

CAPT. B. Oh terrible.

MRS. L. Tell me all about it? (*both sit*)

CAPT. B. I will—(*aside*) it will help to pass the time. (*aloud*) I was then a Lieutenant on board the "Invincible." Our Captain was the friend and schoolfellow of my father, as good as he was brave. I fancy I can see myself there now. The fleets were in presence of one another, three thousand fiery mouths vomited forth powder and shot almost simultaneously. Our ship was at the end of the line enveloped in dark clouds of smoke. We could not see the signals from the Admiral's ship. It was this piece of ill luck that caused our

loss. Two of the enemy's vessels seeing us separated from the rest of the fleet, bore down upon us and with the wind in their favour raked us fore and aft, the spars fell to the deck, and in an instant they had boarded us; our Captain fought at the head of his gallant crew like a lion, but in the hottest of the fight seeing my life in danger, turned to save me and was bayoneted through the heart by a fierce-looking marine, and fell dead at my feet. But the ruffian never lived to tell the tale, for mad with grief and rage, I drove a bullet through his brain. I then led on with renewed vigour, but our ship had been struck below the water mark and was fast sinking; we fought bravely to the last, and then those who were alive and uninjured, I ordered to swim for their lives, and chance one of the fleet picking us up. I and three men alone were saved, the rest killed and wounded. I lost him, but damme, madam, I revenged his death!

MRS. L. Ah!

CAPT. P. (*after a pause*) I swore!

MRS. L. Captain!

CAPT. B. (*wiping away a tear*) Forgive me, the recital of that battle, the remembrance of a man who was a second father to me was too much for me. No, I could not contain myself, I must have sworn or choked.

MRS. L. You know what our agreement was?

CAPT. B. You will not have courage to enforce it.

MRS. L. Why not? Did you not swear?

CAPT. B. Did you not cry? Did I deceive myself? No. I see still the tear glistening on your cheek from those eyes in which I thought to read my pardon. Why, during my recital you followed me entirely, you wrestled with me, you fought with me, you cried with me. I have not been equal to the love test it is true, but I was relating to you the greatest grief of my life. You alone are worthy to understand it. So nearly winning, shall I lose all for such an offence? Oh no, for without you I could not live.

MRS. L. Well, you must not die. I forgive you.

CAPT. B. Then I shall swear again.

MRS. L. Again!

CAPT. B. Yes, only once this time, fidelity to you, and if ever I attempt it again, recall to my mind —

MRS. L. (*warningly*) THE LOVE TEST.

**Curtain.**



